

NGA Review Complete

Central Intelligence Agency	
Washington, D. C. 20505	
	NGA Review Complete
DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE	
22 April 1985	
China's Malipo Campaign: The Military Benefit	ts
SUMMARY	
The extent of Chinese military pressure along to Vietnam has been a matter of concern and confusion officials and Cambodian resistance leaders. To many obstance assaults against Vietnam have appeared insignificant and, Vietnam's 1985 dry season offensive in Cambodia, have casualties and limited damage. In fact, along a 10-kilo 5-kilometer-deep front in the remote and mountainous to Malipo County, the opposite has been true. We belief intended the sometimes fierce fighting along this desolated Vietnam politically, but the reasons for the location and stygo beyond foreign policy goals. In a period of rejuvent outdated armed forces, Malipo has proved an exceptional for troops and equipment. But although the Chinese	among ASEAN servers, Chinese compared with re involved few meter-wide and errain of China's eve Beijing has e front to press rile of the battles ation of China's

This memorandum was prepared by

East Asian Analysis,
as of 22 April 1985 was used in its preparation. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Defense Issues Branch, China Division, OEA, on

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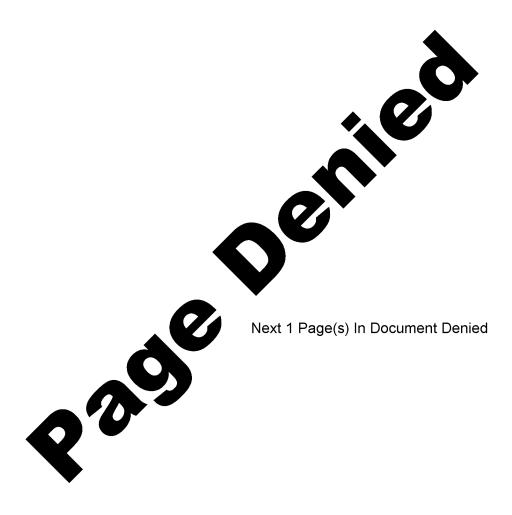
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e Malipo Front		
tops, some 1 to m entrenched ar acked and count nior Vietnamese i t China has fired yen Province ove	ps initially crossed the Vietnamese border south of Malipo in Aldent Reagan's visit to Beijing—and took control of at least for 2 kilometers inside Vietnam. Since then, in hand—to—hand combined bunkered positions, Chinese and Vietnamese infantry forces have a strattacked for control of the more vulnerable hilltops. In addition general, in an interview with a Western journalist, recently estimate that a million rounds of artillery and mortar shells into Vietnam's are the past year. Today, Chinese forces retain control of most high of the border. Many of the smaller hills have traded hands seven	ive pat ve , a ed Ha
	Chinese Shelling: The Daily Pressure	
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pieces to shell shorter range v recoiless rifles	the Chinese are using 122-mm, 130-mm, and 152-mm artillery the Vietnamese the vast majority of rounds are fired from veapons such as 60-mm, 82-mm, and 120-mm mortars and used by Chinese infantry regiments. The mortars have a of six kilometers and are ideal for the close-in fighting typical front.	2
The human ar r own accounts, paities have bee	nd materiel price of the Malipo campaign has been considerable. B Chinese forces have fought hundreds of battles for the hilltons and	v .
A Chines	e provincial radio broadcast in June reported on a newly designe hat had evacuated 500 wounded from the Malipo front in the firs	d st
months of right	and and the second seco	

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The b	loodiest fight	ing took plac	e in February	, when the	Chinese	threw two	
visionsor	24,000 men	into the fray.		<u> </u>			2: 2:
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Disrup	tions to the l	ocal Chinese	economywit	h a range o	of 50,000	to 120,000	
en in the H	eia over the p	ast yearaiso	appear to be	substantial.			2
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lf Mali	po has been c	ostly for the (Chinese, Vietna	m also has	paid a high	n price for	
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the Vietnemese than faculty	
the Vietnamese then forced to try to dislodge the occupying Chinese forces. Endopting this policy, Beijing believes it can engage Vietnamese forces in protracte combatforcing the Vietnamese to initiate some battleswithout the internation condemnation that would result from a major Chinese attack. Moreover, the Chinese calculate that their policy will provide territorial bargaining chips for any future politic programmes with the still provide territorial bargaining chips for any future politic	al
negotiations with Hanoi.	
But although this strategy suits Beijing's political purposes, it is also motivated be a pragmatic desire to compensate for China's serious military shortcomings:	25X1 • y
O Unlike some of the newly mechanized Chinese infantry forces along th Sino-Soviet border, ² ground force divisions in southern China are best prepare for infantry operations and for fighting from heavily fortified positional defenses. The terrain of Malipo County plays to these strengths, allowing for little use of tanks or highly mobile, mechanized infantry forces.	d
o China's military forces are poorly equipped to protect lengthy logistics lines particularly in the face of enemy air power, but shallow ground incursions justinside Vietnam allow for logistics lines on Chinese soil to be protected from potential airstrikes by stationary CSA-1 surface-to-air missile batteries and fighter aircraft operating from permanent installations.	t
o China's air force is ill-prepared to provide close-air support to Chinese infantry	,
forces penetrating deep into Vietnam. But with Chinese long-range artillery guns firing from secure positions within Malipo County, ground troops receive the artillery support needed to soften up Vietnamese fortifications preceding ar infantry attack.	5 9
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Beyond Politics		
order fighting as much nternational political stat	ry press is increasingly highlighting the n as a training ground for Chinese i ement. A 7-April article in the <u>Liberatio</u> as "trained a new generation of reliable s	nfantry forces as an on Army Daily boasted
oolicy. China's aging hig	conflict as a training ground, in fact, a h command is well aware of the lack of opears to relish the chance to test the	combat experience in
ejuvenateu onicei corps.		
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Vhat's Next?		
Beijing shows no s las at least seven comba	signs of changing its strategy of "a thou t divisions	usand thorns." China
	a total of some 90,000 men field d	eployed near Malipo.
	Chinese engineers, m	oreover, continue to ven built all-weather

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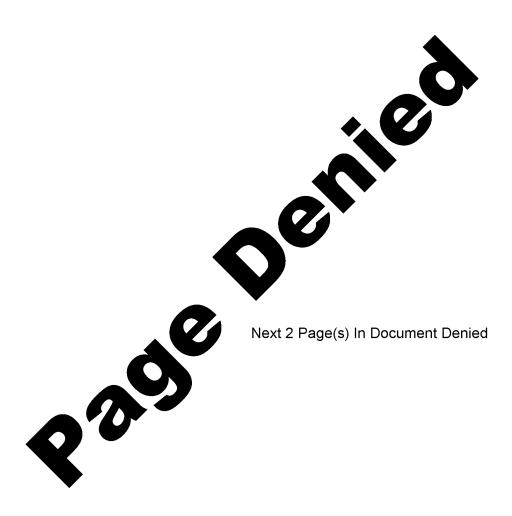
Although we believe the fighting at Malipo will continue—intensifying when Beijing seeks to score political points—we doubt the Chinese are prepared to open up any new "Malipo salients." There would be little additional political mileage to be gained because Beijing seeks to avoid criticism that it is the aggressor; secondly, a new front would create an additional drain on Chinese economic resources. The Chinese military, moreover, needs no new southern training ground because it has been able rotate various units and officers through Malipo. Finally, the tenacity with which the Vietnamese have fought against numerically superior forces for the hilltops of Ha Tuyen Province will give the Chinese leadership pause before contemplating the opening of any new "running sores" along the Sino-Vietnamese frontier.

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We believe that Vietnamese forces will continue to react strongly to Chinese forays on the tactical level but the "thousand thorns" are likely to have little effect on overall Vietnamese policy. Beijing's actions did not deter Hanoi's largest dry season offensive in six years and we detect no effort to move more Vietnamese divisions to the Chinese border. Indeed, on 13 February Vietnamese Foreign Minister Thach told the Australian Ambassador in Hanoi that, unlike last spring, he had had fewer sleepless nights recently because of urgent messages from commanders on the Chinese frontier.

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Hanoi's leaders appear to be gauging correctly the limits of the Chinese strategy and display confidence that local commanders can successfully manage the pressure. The Vietnamese probably will continue to avoid any temptation to match the Chinese buildup opposite Ha Tuyen Province, an act that would risk escalated fighting in an area of limited strategic significance. China's policy of keeping border tensions within carefully controlled bounds—not building up, for example, along traditional invasion corridors—has not been lost on Hanoi and gives the Vietnamese little motivation to respond in kind to Chinese provocations.



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14. James Kelly, Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asia, ISA, Room 4E817 Pentagon	
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16. Major General James C. Pfautz, Assistant Air Force Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Room 4A931, Pentagon	
17. Commodore James D. Cossey, Director, East Asian and Pacific Affairs, ISA, Room 4C839	
18. Edward Ross, ISA, Rm 4/C/840	
19. Lt.Colonel Larry Mitchel. AF/XOXXP Plans and Operations, Pentagon, Room 4/D/1034 20. Major Chris Johnson, OJCSJ-5, Far East South Asia Division, Pentagon, Room 2/E/973	
21. John J. Sloan. DIO for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, Room 2/C/238, Pentagon	
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